

## **Monthly Report for September 2015**

*Submitted October 6, 2015*

### **Data Management**

#### MSDE

Staff has loaded all assessment data, National Student Clearinghouse data, and the Cross Program and Course Catalogue data files. Student-Course-Grade-Teacher (SCGT) data from MSDE has also been loaded into the system. This data provides course and teacher information for all Prekindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students. The research staff is exploring this data for use in upcoming analysis. The SCGT data will also enhance the Center's required Dual Enrollment report required for submission to the General Assembly and Governor in December. Staff continues to load the remainder of the 2014-2015 academic year data as it is received from our partner agencies. The Center will be receiving another attendance file from MSDE in couple of weeks.

#### MHEC

The Financial Aid Information System data has been loaded (2008-2012). Staff has received and loaded DIS (Degree Information) and EIS (Enrollment Information) from the new MACII Collection. Staff has plans to discuss other files with MHEC such as the EDS, TSS, EOTS, CIS, and SRS data sets.

#### DLLR

Staff has received 2015 files for LACES, NEDP, Claimants, Wage data, UI Tax data and GED data from DLLR and is in the process of loading them.

### **Reporting**

The Center has established a standardized format for its dashboards. The format provides the following explanatory sections:

1. Details - provides an overview of the contents of the dashboard;
2. Important Note - discusses any key limitations or issues the reader should understand when reviewing the dashboard;
3. Key Terms - provides a list of terms used in the dashboard with a link to a Glossary that defines the terms;
4. Suggestions for Use - describes how the dashboard fits into the Research Agenda of the Center;
5. Highlights - discusses any trends or key pieces of information that may be identified by the dashboard;
6. Notes - describes possible future reporting on the subject of the dashboard or other relevant information;

7. Data Limitations and Caveats - lists limitations of the data, such as the fact that the workforce data does not include federal employees, or caveats, such as explanations why the data may not match similar reporting by other organizations; and
8. Date Published/Updated.

The purpose for developing the standardized reporting format is to ensure that each dashboard properly communicates key information about the data. The text will be developed by a subject matter expert and then reviewed by different team members to ensure clarity and correct and consistent usage of terminology.

As reported at the Governing Board meeting, staff is close to completing and posting several dashboards. However, there have been different data quality issues to resolve prior to releasing those dashboards. It is likely that as development on the first set of dashboards continues, new issues will arise that will have to be resolved before moving forward. While this slows the production process initially, issues are being resolved and they will not have to be re-addressed in the future.

### **System Development**

Staff has been exploring several options for procuring and implementing offsite disaster recovery storage and a new system firewall. The Department of Information Technology (DoIT) provides both services through a Maryland Enterprise Solution. Staff has spent considerable time understanding these solutions and whether they are a good fit for the Center's needs. The DoIT model is certainly an effective and cost efficient solution for agencies whose data centers are co-located at the data center facility managed as part of the enterprise solution. However, the Center just relocated to MSDE from DPSCS and cannot move the data center again at this time. Working with the DoIT solution remotely would require a significant and ongoing investment in VPRN (virtual private routed networks) services. Accordingly, staff is returning to the original plan of directly procuring a firewall and an offsite disaster recovery storage solution. Staff is also developing a two year plan to eventually migrate the system to the DoIT data center, which will eventually allow the Center to take advantage of the cost savings offered by the the Enterprise Solution.

Other tasks being worked on by the staff include:

1. Changing website configuration for additional web security;
2. Developing an Intranet site for the staff;
3. Completing the installation of the data architecture software (Embarkedaro) and providing users access to the data models and data dictionary;
4. Enhancing master file transfer (MFT) security completed;
5. Working with DLLR to test and use the MFT for transferring its files (consistent with other partner agencies); and
6. Installing components of SPSS for researchers.

In the next month staff will be working to:

1. Upgrade all components of Oracle (Oracle Database, Webcenter and OBIEE);
2. Harden all the passwords for security,

3. Schedule and complete implementation of VNX upgrade to 5700; and
4. Migrate data loading tools (OWB to ODI).

### **Research Branch**

The Research Branch developed and delivered a Training Academy to the legislative staffers who are assigned to educational budget and policy analysis. The training covered the following topics:

1. The Research Agenda and the Research Branch Research Plan for the 2015-16 academic year.
2. A detailed overview of the system data and the types of research questions that can be answered;
3. The importance of examining student groups patterns by race or ethnicity, socioeconomic status, language, gender, ability and settings, and how the researchers will handle reporting those patterns beyond simply reporting differences; and
4. Identity matching rate table that was presented to the Governing Board earlier in the month.

Researchers are also actively analyzing data about such issues as Dual Enrollment, Developmental (Remedial) Education, and workforce outcomes as a function of secondary and postsecondary backgrounds. Researchers will also finalize the Early Childhood Workforce report in the next couple weeks after a meeting with critical stakeholders at MSDE.

Finally, the Research Branch was informed that it was funded for the Synthetic Data project. The proposal required a substantial effort on the part of all members of the Research Branch to conceptualize, design, and write up. The synthetic data project will be a nation-leading effort toward a new strategy to share public data in a way that assures privacy and confidentiality while allowing for access by outside researchers.